

## **Pride Pak CEO says Medina great fit for company**

**Hopes to start construction next month on new facility**



Photos by Tom Rivers

Steve Karr (right), chief executive officer for Pride Pak Canada, meets village officials and others working on the company's new 62,000-square-foot vegetable processing facility. The site plan for the project was presented to the Medina Village Board this evening. He is pictured with Mauro LoRusso, vice president of finance for Pride Pak (center); Gabrielle Barone, vice president of business development for the Orleans Economic Development Agency (far left); and Marguerite Sherman, village trustee (second from left).

By Tom Rivers, Editor Posted 6 October 2015

MEDINA – A company coming to Orleans County looked at several sites, including into Pennsylvania, but Medina turned out to be a great fit for Pride Pak, the company's CEO said this evening following a Village Planning Board meeting when a site plan for the 62,000-square-foot building was presented.

Steve Karr said Medina is close to the border for the Canadian-based company and also sits in an agricultural region with close proximity to a big population base in the U.S.

Ultimately, Karr said the Orleans Economic Development Agency was very responsive in helping the company find a location "that makes sense for us."

The company expects to start construction next month on the new vegetable processing facility, a site that will likely be expanded in phases and could see 200 employees at full build-out.

Pride Pak will have 85 to 100 employees as part of the first phase. Construction should start next month, pending final approvals on the site plan from the Village Planning Board, and other local and state permits.

Karr would like the building to be done in April for equipment to be moved in. He would like to start processing and packaging vegetables next June.

He knows the weather over the winter will play a big factor in meeting that ambitious schedule.

D.R. Chamberlain Construction of Lockport is the general contractor for the new building.



This shows a rendering of the new building on Maple Ridge Road across from GCC.

The company received a warm welcome from local officials this evening.

"It will be a cornerstone for the rest of the business park," said Deputy Mayor Mike Sidari.

Village Trustee Owen Toale said the new jobs will be a big boost for the community and many local families, leaving a ripple effect felt at restaurants, stores and in the real estate market.

"Medina hasn't had a project of this size in many years," said Gabrielle Barone, vice president of business development for the Orleans EDA.

The company is privately owned and the business fits well in a agricultural community, Barone said.

Medina also has the existing infrastructure with water and sewer to meet the company's needs. The EDA has the land, and Pride Pak will buy 13 acres from the agency. That land currently is not on the tax rolls. Pride Pak will gradually pay the full assessed value for the property in 5 percent increments over 20 years.

Barone said the business park has been a work in progress over 30 years, with the village and EDA working closely to expand the property and provide the needed utilities.

"It looks like this just came together but it has been years," she said.

Karr said Barone deserves a lot of credit for bringing Pride Pak to Medina.

"She was always there trying to figure out how it could be done," he said. "The EDA has a very quick response time."

Karr has been in the fresh fruit and vegetable processing, packing and distributing business since 1983. Pride Pak is Ontario, Canada's largest fruit and vegetable processor and currently exports 50 percent of its produce to the U.S. market.

The company packs vegetables for other companies, including Wegmans Food Market. The vegetables are packed fresh, not frozen, Karr said.

The company wants to work with local farmers with carrots and other "root vegetables" in the beginning as long as they meet food safety guidelines for the vegetables, Karr said. The Medina site will process vegetables, and Karr said the facility will also package salads, with some of the salads going to Pride Pak's Canadian customers.

Pride Pak expects about 45 truckloads of product each month, or about 1 ½ a day, according to Mike Simon, project engineer with BME Associates, a Fairport engineering firm.

Most of truck traffic will be vegetables coming in, but some truck traffic will include vegetable waste, about 220 tons a month, that will be delivered to local livestock farms, Simon said.

The company's site plan also includes 114 parking spaces. The village code for the Maple Ridge Corridor calls for 5 spaces per 1,000 square feet for a building, which would be 310 spaces for a 62,000-square-foot building. Or, if the code for light industrial is applied, there should be 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet or 124 for Pride Pak.

The company will likely seek a variance from that code. Simon said Pride Pak would prefer to keep as much of the site green space as possible.

It will have access roads on each side of the plant, as well as loading docks.

The site plan will go before the Orleans County Planning Board on Oct. 22 for its recommendation before returning to the Village Planning Board for a final vote on Nov. 3.